

Amendments to the Claims

1. (Currently Amended) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity higher than the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and

selectively increasing the necking in the central region of the nonwoven web relative to the two edge regions, ~~or decreasing the necking in the two edge regions relative to the central region;~~

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of reducing necking resistance in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The process of Claim 2, wherein the step of reducing necking resistance in the central region comprises the step of selectively heating the central region.

4. (Original) The process of Claim 3, wherein the step of selectively heating the central region comprises the step of applying a hot air knife to the central region.

5 - 9. Canceled

10. (Original) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the step of heating the entire nonwoven web between the first and second nips.

11. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.05-1.7 times the first average surface velocity.

12. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity.

13. (Original) The process of Claim 1, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.2-1.4 times the first average surface velocity.

Claims 14-31. (Canceled)

32. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 1, wherein the necked nonwoven material has a length which is at least 1.2 times an initial pre-necked length.

33. (Withdrawn) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

34. (Currently Amended) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity at least 1.2 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and

selectively increasing the necking in the central region relative to the two edge regions, ~~or decreasing the necking in the two edge regions relative to the central region~~, to form a necked nonwoven material having an average basis weight

in the central region within about \pm 7% of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of reducing necking resistance in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

35. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 34, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 5% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions.

36. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 34, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 3% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions

37. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 34, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

38. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 34, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

39. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 34, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

40. (Withdrawn) The process of Claim 34, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

41. (Currently Amended) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a ~~non-woven~~ nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity and a second nip having a second average surface velocity about ~~1.1-1.5~~ 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and selectively increasing the necking in the central region relative to the two edge regions, ~~or decreasing the necking in the two edge regions relative to the central region~~, to form a necked nonwoven material having an average basis weight in the central region within about $\pm 3\%$ of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of reducing necking resistance in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

42. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 41, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

43. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 41, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

44. (Previously Presented) The process of Claim 41, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

45. (Withdrawn) The process of Claim 41, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible web.

46. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity higher than the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and selectively increasing the necking in the central region of the nonwoven web relative to the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of increasing necking force in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

47. (New) The process of Claim 46, wherein the step of increasing necking force in the central region comprises the step of selectively increasing a distance traveled by the central region between the first and second nips, relative to a distance traveled by the two edge regions.

48. (New) The process of Claim 47, wherein the step of selectively increasing the distance traveled by the central region comprises the step of passing the nonwoven web over a guide roller having a profiled outer surface.

49. (New) The process of Claim 48, wherein the nonwoven web is passed over two guide rollers, each having a profiled outer surface.

50. (New) The process of Claim 46, further comprising the step of heating the entire nonwoven web between the first and second nips.

51. (New) The process of Claim 46, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.05-1.7 times the first average surface velocity.

52. (New) The process of Claim 46, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity.

53. (New) The process of Claim 46, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.2-1.4 times the first average surface velocity.

54. (New) The process of Claim 46, wherein the necked nonwoven material has a length which is at least 1.2 times an initial pre-necked length.

55. (New) The process of Claim 46, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

56. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity at least 1.2 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and

selectively increasing the necking in the central region relative to the two edge regions, to form a necked nonwoven material having an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 7% of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of increasing necking force in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

57. (New) The process of Claim 56, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 5% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions.

58. (New) The process of Claim 56, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 3% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions

59. (New) The process of Claim 56, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

60. (New) The process of Claim 56, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

61. (New) The process of Claim 56, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

62. (New) The process of Claim 56, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

63. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity and a second nip having a second average surface velocity about 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and

selectively increasing the necking in the central region relative to the two edge regions, to form a necked nonwoven material having an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 3% of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively increasing the necking in the central region comprises the step of increasing necking force in the central region relative to the two edge regions.

64. (New) The process of Claim 63, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

65. (New) The process of Claim 63, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

66. (New) The process of Claim 63, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

67. (New) The process of Claim 63, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible web.

68. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity higher than the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions of the nonwoven web relative to the central region;

wherein the step of selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions comprises the step of selectively chilling the two edge regions.

69. (New) The process of Claim 68, further comprising the step of heating the entire nonwoven web between the first and second nips.

70. (New) The process of Claim 68, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.05-1.7 times the first average surface velocity.

71. (New) The process of Claim 68, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity.

72. (New) The process of Claim 68, wherein the second average surface velocity is about 1.2-1.4 times the first average surface velocity.

73. (New) The process of Claim 68, wherein the necked nonwoven material has a length which is at least 1.2 times an initial pre-necked length.

74. (New) The process of Claim 68, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

75. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity, and a second nip having a second average surface velocity at least 1.2 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and

selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions of the nonwoven web relative to the central region, to form a necked nonwoven material having an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 7% of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions comprises the step of selectively chilling the two edge regions.

76. (New) The process of Claim 75, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 5% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions.

77. (New) The process of Claim 75, wherein the necked nonwoven web has an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 3% of the average basis weight in the two edge regions

78. (New) The process of Claim 75, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

79. (New) The process of Claim 75, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

80. (New) The process of Claim 75, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

81. (New) The process of Claim 75, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible film.

82. (New) A process for making a necked nonwoven material having improved cross-directional uniformity, comprising the steps of:

providing a nonwoven web having a central region and two edge regions;

passing the nonwoven web through a first nip having a first average surface velocity and a second nip having a second average surface velocity about 1.1-1.5 times the first average surface velocity;

necking the nonwoven web between the first and second nips; and selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions of the nonwoven web relative to the central region, to form a necked nonwoven material

having an average basis weight in the central region within about \pm 3% of an average basis weight in the two edge regions;

wherein the step of selectively decreasing the necking in the two edge regions comprises the step of selectively chilling the two edge regions.

83. (New) The process of Claim 82, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond web.

84. (New) The process of Claim 82, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a meltblown web.

85. (New) The process of Claim 82, wherein the nonwoven web comprises a spunbond-meltblown-spunbond laminate.

86. (New) The process of Claim 82, further comprising the step of combining the necked nonwoven web with an elastomeric or extendible web.